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AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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The Oil Menace

The following article pertaining to the oil problem in other countries is reprinted from the bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

As the result of extensive inquiries addressed to Embassies and Consulates as well as to commercial bodies and industrial authorities, a large amount of information has been obtained by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in regard to the trouble experienced from oil on the European seaboard, and as to laws and regulations in force. The following is a brief summary.

Belgium. In the Merchant Service there are nine ships using oil fuel, and on the shipping list are 379 motor-boats. None of these are provided with oil-separators, nor are separating barges provided in ports. Practically the whole coast is polluted. The species of birds most affected are the common Scoter and the Blackheaded Gull.

France. Strict orders have been issued to the French Navy. Discharge of oil is prohibited within ten miles of the port of Marseilles, and an order prohibits the discharge of substances that may be noxious to fish. Of the merchant ships and fishing-boats 301 are oil-burners and nineteen of these are provided with separators. No oil-separating barges are provided. The birds suffering most around the French coasts are diving ducks, such as Scoters and birds of the Auk family, such as Puffin, Razorbill and Guillemot.

Germany. Information from Germany varies, as the oil appears to decrease and subsequently reappear, as on the British coast. A number of oil-driven vessels are stated to be fitted with separators, but statistics are not yet at hand. All cruisers and torpedo-boats of the State Navy constructed since the war have means for storing oily bilge-water until it can be disposed of in port. Harbor regulations in certain ports forbid the discharge of waste oil. Diving birds are those most affected, especially Guillemots, Auks and Divers; also Gulls and other species, but not to the same extent.

Greece. Discharge of waste oil is forbidden within the ports, but the coast is not affected, and no report is to hand of birds found oiled. Oil fuel is not in general use; one vessel employing it is fitted with separators.

Italy. Oil pollution is limited to a few ports and the neighboring areas. Discharge is prohibited in Genoa, Leghorn, Messina and Trieste; in Naples the oil is collected from the water. Ships of the Navigazione Generale Italiana and La Columbia Company are fitted with separators, with satisfactory results.

Norway. Regulations forbid discharge of oil in the ports only. Oil fuel is used by 178 steamships and 305 motor-ships, but no complaints of coast pollution are reported.

Portugal. Whole coast more or less affected. Discharge of oil prohibited within statutory limits. The few oil-burning ships are not equipped with separators.

Spain. Fuller information awaited.

Sweden. Regulations provide for the collection of waste discharge into casks, and if necessary the harbor authorities are to make provision to prevent discharged oil from any vessel overspreading the harbor. Orders to the Navy prohibit discharge within harbors of populous places.

(For oil problem of our coast see articles in "The Gull" of April, June and July 1919; September 1920; May and August 1924; February 1925. Editor.)

Wild-Life Refuge in Salton Sea Area, California

President Hoover, by an Executive act of November 25, 1930, has set aside as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds the Government lands in the southern part of Salton Sea, in Imperial County, California. This refuge, to be known as the Salton Sea Wild Life Refuge, attracts great numbers of waterfowl during their migrations and will constitute an important link in the network of refuges to be established in the west-coast region under the migratory bird conservation act of February 18, 1929.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, on December 18th, authorized purchases of lands by the Biological Survey for migratory game-bird refuges in Florida, California, North Carolina and Nebraska, aggregating 73,780 acres. The cost to the Government will average $5.28 an acre.

The new purchases in California will add 8,982 acres to the Salton Sea Wild Life Refuge. The purchase authorized, together with the public lands recently set aside by the President, will create a refuge of more than 24,715 acres for waterfowl and other migrants in the Imperial Valley.

The new Florida refuge will extend about twelve miles along Apalachee Bay, in Wakulla, Jefferson and Taylor Counties, and will be known as the St. Marks Migratory Bird Refuge. It will contain 13,981 acres.

Other purchases are The Swanquarter Migratory Bird Refuge to be established in North Carolina; Crescent Lake Migratory Bird Refuge in the sandhills of western Nebraska.

The ultimate objective is the establishment of one or more such refuges in each State of the Union. The Act authorizes annual appropriations for ten years for the purpose of carrying out this objective.

Arrivals and Nesting Records: Mr. Oliver J. Millard reported the beginning of a nest by a pair of Winter Wrens, in a eucalyptus tree in Sutro Forest on March 13th, and a Western Tanager in his garden in San Francisco on April 21st.

The Allen Hummingbird was reported in Oakland February 4th, by Gordon Bolander and in San Francisco February 12th by Mrs. A. B. Stephens.

The Black-headed Grosbeak was heard in Oakland April 15th, and the Lazuli Bunting April 16th, by Mrs. H. L. Pletcher.

Lawrence Goldfinches and Russet-backed Thrushes were seen in Golden Gate Park, April 25th, by Mrs. A. B. Stephens.

Russet-backed Thrushes were seen in Ross April 26th, by Chas. A. Bryant.

Ross Goose: If you get tired of your dog but still want something to tag you around, raise a Ross Goose. Chester K. Brooks, of Cleveland, raised one of these rare birds and it was unutterably distressed when shut up alone. It simply had to have a companion of some kind other than adults of its own species—a dog, a bantam hen, the children, or Mr. Brooks himself. A beautiful little goose, almost pure white, and no one knows where the wild ones nest as yet. But it is up near the north pole somewhere. The Wilson Bulletin, Vol. XLIII, No. 1, March, 1931.

April Field Trip was taken to Lake Merced Sunday the 13th, with thirty-four members and guests. The morning was cloudy with a brisk cool north wind; by noon the sun came out making the afternoon ideal.

Starting from Junipero Serra Boulevard, the forenoon was spent along the ravine where the associations of willow, wild lilac, cañon dogwood, dense tangles of wild blackberry vines and chapparal, together with a small stream, afford ideal conditions for the many species of birds noted. Willow Goldfinches were in the majority; their singing was incessant. A Bewick Wren proved of unusual interest by giving three variations to his song. A Fox Sparrow and a Hermit Thrush still lingered. Many Allen Hummingbirds were present and a lone Rufous Hummingbird was seen.

Arriving at the Lake, the usual numbers of species were present though the numbers of individuals were fewer. A female Mallard with nine tiny ducklings was a pleasing sight. Several Wilson Snipe were flushed.

The big attraction of the day was near the lower end of the Lake where a small stream flows in. Here was a veritable bird bath, with Audubon and Myrtle Warblers, Pine Siskins, Linnets, Purple Finches, Willow and Green-backed Goldfinches and Allen Hummingbirds splashing about like small boys in "The Old Swimmin' Hole."

Farther on a pair of Western Grebes were discovered performing what Dawson calls a "wedding march." He describes it as "A stately affair participated in by both male and female. The female leads, probably under the instigation of the male. They rise and tread the surface of the water, standing with outstretched wings, necks beautifully arched, and they strike the water with their feet so that they maintain an upright position and move forward, keeping about three feet apart. After moving about a dozen feet, both collapse and dive."

Plain Titmice, not ordinarily found on the San Francisco Peninsula, were represented by two individuals feeding in a Monterey Pine near the power-house by the Lake.

Along the east shore of the Lake were found nests of four Mallards containing five, eight, nine and eleven eggs respectively; nests of three Yellow-throats each containing three eggs; and nests of three Song Sparrows, one unfinished, one with one egg and one young, and one with three eggs.

A total of sixty-seven species was noted for the Lake Merced Region:

Red-throated Loon
Eared Grebe
Western Grebe
Pied-billed Grebe
Farallon Cormorant
Brandt Cormorant
Black-cr. Night Heron
American Bittern
Mallard
Baldpate
Canvas-back Duck
White-winged Scoter
Ruddy Duck
Red-breasted Merganser
Sparrow Hawk
California Quail
Virginia Rail
Sora Rail
Coot
Wilson Snipe
Long-billed Dowitcher
Glaucous-winged Gull
Western Gull
California Gull
Mourning Dove
Anna Hummingbird
Rufous Hummingbird
Allen Hummingbird
Kingfisher
Red-shafted Flicker
Downy Woodpecker
Western Flycatcher
Horned Lark
Violet-green Swallow
Bank Swallow
Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Chickadee
Plain Titmouse
Bush-tit
Wren-tit
Bewick Wren
Marsh Wren
Robin
Hermit Thrush
Warbling Vireo
Lutescent Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Myrtle Warbler
Audubon Warbler
Yellow-throat
Pileolated Warbler
Meadowlark
Red-winged Blackbird
Brewer Blackbird
Purple Finch
Linnet
Pine Siskin
Willow Goldfinch
Green-backed Goldfinch
Spotted Towhee
Savannah Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Junco
Nuttall Sparrow
Song Sparrow

Some members of the party continued along the beach to the Cliff House and noted the following species: Surf-bird; Ruddy and Black Turnstones; Wandering Tattler (an early record); Brown Pelican; Surf Scoter; Short-billed [illegible] Sanderling; House Sparrow.

Chas. A. Bryant, histor[illegible]

Audubon Notes

May Meeting will be held on Thursday evening, the 14th, at 8 o'clock, room 19, 2nd floor, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Thomas T. McCabe, whose subject will be "Birds of British Columbia." Bird skins and slides will be shown.

May Field Trip will be taken Sunday, the 17th, to the McCoy Ranch near Livermore. Members who have sent in their names will receive directions by mail.

Directors' Meeting: There will be a meeting of the Directors at 6:45 on May 14th in the Ferry Building.

New Members: The following new members were elected in April: Mrs. E. H. Hart and Miss Constance Hart and Robert Taylor, all of Oakland. Mrs. A. H. Purlenky of San Francisco.

Observations reported at the lectures:

Our young member, Robert Taylor, recently observed an English Sparrow with nesting material in its beak frantically trying to find its new nesting site on a draw bridge at Bay Farm Island. The bridge had opened and the nest was temporarily misplaced. Time did not permit further observation to determine whether or not this hazardous location had to be abandoned.

He also reported seeing a male Bullock Oriole in his yard in East Oakland, on April 6th. A pair have nested in the eucalyptus trees for the past few years. The female had not yet arrived.

Eddie McClintock: April 5th and 6th, Bay Farm Island, two Knots in breeding plumage and an American Egret, Long-billed Curlew and seven Wilson Snipes.

Harold Swanton: March 22nd, Los Banos, pair of Blue-winged Teal; near Pacheco Pass, Ferruginous Rough-legged Hawk and a Road-runner. April 11th, St. Mary's, six Black-headed Grosbeaks, Tolmie and Townsend Warblers and Red-breasted Merganser.

Robert Failing: April 23rd, Berkeley, Crow.

Brighton C. Cain: April 26th, campus, Berkeley, Russet-backed Thrush.

Chas. A. Bryant: April 28th, Nighthawk at Franklin and Fell Streets, San Francisco.

April Meetings: April was a month of unusual activity for the Audubon Association of the Pacific. Four lectures were given instead of the customary one.

Through the kindness of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, we enjoyed the advantages of a larger hall, using their commodious Auditorium at 245 Market Street, San Francisco.

Notwithstanding that April proved to be a month of many lectures in San Francisco, our four meetings attracted an attendance of approximately 800.

The lectures, as enumerated in our April issue, covered a great deal of ground in bird knowledge and were ably presented. If, in addition to entertaining our members, these lectures also revealed the joy of bird study to the uninitiated and scattered seeds of bird conservation and protection, they shall not have been in vain.

The Association is indebted to Mrs. Kelly, Miss Wythe and Messrs McLean and Wilson, who made this series possible.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

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